

SENATE, No. 1746

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 13, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator TROY SINGLETON

District 7 (Burlington)

Senator KRISTIN M. CORRADO

District 40 (Bergen, Essex, Morris and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Authorizes grants to purchase and rehabilitate abandoned homes for homeless veterans.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT authorizing grants to purchase and rehabilitate abandoned
2 homes for homeless veterans and amending P.L.2017, c.258.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6
7 1. Section 2 of P.L.2017, c.258 (C.52:27D-517) is amended to
8 read as follows:

9 2. As used in this act:

10 "Director" means the Director of the Division of Housing and
11 Community Resources in the Department of Community Affairs.

12 **["Disabled"]** "Disability" means **[a person who fulfills the**
13 **definition of having a "disability"]** the same as that term is defined
14 pursuant to section 3 of the "Americans with Disabilities Act of
15 1990," 42 U.S.C. s.12102.

16 "Division" means the Division of Housing and Community
17 Resources in the Department of Community Affairs.

18 "Eligible veteran" means a **[disabled or low-income]** veteran
19 who is low-income or has a disability, or both.

20 "Energy efficient features or equipment" means features or
21 equipment within a primary residence that help to reduce the
22 amount of electricity used to heat, cool, or ventilate the residence,
23 including but not limited to insulation, weatherstripping, air sealing,
24 repaired heating systems, or duct sealing.

25 "Family member" means a spouse, child, parent, sibling, aunt,
26 uncle, niece, nephew, first cousin, grandparent, grandchild, father-
27 in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, stepparent,
28 stepchild, stepbrother, stepsister, half brother, or half sister, whether
29 the individual is related by blood, marriage, or adoption.

30 "Homeless veteran" means a veteran who is living outside, or in
31 a building not meant for human habitation or which the veteran has
32 no legal right to occupy, in an emergency shelter, or in a temporary
33 housing program which may include a transitional and supportive
34 housing program if habitation time limits exist, or temporarily in
35 the home of another household, or in a motel.

36 "Low-income veteran" means a veteran occupying a household
37 with a gross household income equal to 50 percent or less of the
38 median gross household income for households of the same size,
39 and within the same housing region, as defined by subsection b. of
40 section 4 of P.L.1985, c.222 (C.52:27D-304).

41 "Primary residence" means a dwelling unit that is owned by the
42 eligible veteran or by a family member of the eligible veteran, and
43 occupied by the eligible veteran as his or her principal residence.

44 "Qualified organization" means a nonprofit veterans'
45 organization that qualifies as a section 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(19) tax
46 exempt organization under the Internal Revenue Code.

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 "Rehabilitation" means the repair, renovation, alteration, or
2 reconstruction of any building or structure.

3 "Veteran" means any resident of the State who has been
4 honorably discharged or released under honorable circumstances
5 from active service in any branch of the armed forces of the United
6 States, or any honorably discharged member of the American
7 Merchant Marine who served during World War II and is declared
8 by the United States Department of Defense to be eligible for
9 federal veterans' benefits.

10 (cf: P.L.2017, c.258, s.2)

11
12 2. Section 3 of P.L.2017, c.258 (C.52:27D-518) is amended to
13 read as follows:

14 3. The director shall establish a pilot program to award grants
15 to qualified organizations to rehabilitate **[and modify]** the primary
16 residences of eligible veterans, and to purchase and rehabilitate
17 abandoned homes for occupancy by homeless veterans. The
18 director shall manage the pilot program in consultation with the
19 Adjutant General of the Department of Military and Veterans'
20 Affairs to most effectively advance the needs of eligible veterans.
21 The director shall administer the pilot program for five years
22 following the operative date of P.L.2017, c.258 (C.52:27D-
23 516 et seq.). Grant awards totaling \$1 million shall be awarded
24 during each year the pilot program is in operation.

25 a. In addition to any additional information required by the
26 director, a qualified organization seeking a grant under the pilot
27 program shall submit an application to the division that shall
28 include the following information:

29 (1) the approximate number of veterans the qualified
30 organization has the capacity to serve through grant funding; and

31 (2) a description of the type of work to be completed, such as
32 interior home modifications, energy efficiency improvements, and
33 other similar categories of work.

34 b. In order to receive a grant award under the pilot program, a
35 qualified organization shall:

36 (1) demonstrate expertise in providing housing rehabilitation
37 **[and modification]** services for the purpose of making homes
38 accessible, functional, and safe;

39 (2) have experience in successfully carrying out accountability
40 and reporting requirements involved in the proper administration of
41 grant funds; and

42 (3) commit to paying workers employed through the pilot
43 program no less than the prevailing wage rate for the worker's craft
44 or trade, as determined by the Commissioner of Labor and
45 Workforce Development pursuant to P.L.1963, c.150 (C.34:11-
46 56.25 et seq.).

47 c. In awarding grants under the pilot program,

48 (1) the director shall give preference to:

1 (a) qualified organizations that employ workers from an
2 apprenticeable trade participating in the Helmets to Hardhats
3 Program, as certified by the New Jersey State Building and
4 Construction Trades Council, such that not less than five percent of
5 projected labor hours shall be completed by such participating
6 organizations; and

7 (b) qualified organizations that serve communities that the
8 director determines have the greatest need for homeless services;
9 and

10 (2) the director may give preference to qualified organizations
11 to achieve a fair distribution, as determined by the director, among
12 homeless veterans in different geographical regions.

13 d. Low income veterans who **【are】** also **【disabled】** have a
14 disability shall receive preference over other eligible veterans in
15 selection for assistance under the pilot program.

16 e. Grant awards under the pilot program shall be used to
17 **【modify and】** rehabilitate the primary residences of eligible
18 veterans, to purchase and rehabilitate abandoned homes, including
19 homes that have been foreclosed, and for other purposes necessary
20 to advance **【this goal】** these goals, as permitted by the director.
21 Permitted uses of grant funding shall include, but shall not be
22 limited to:

23 (1) installing wheelchair ramps, widening exterior and interior
24 doors, reconfiguring and re-equipping bathrooms to enhance
25 accessibility, removing doorway thresholds, and installing
26 appropriate floor coverings to accommodate the functional
27 limitations that result from having a disability;

28 (2) rehabilitating homes that are in a state of interior or exterior
29 disrepair; and

30 (3) installing energy efficient features or equipment if the
31 eligible veteran's monthly residential utility costs are greater than
32 five percent of monthly household income, and an energy audit of
33 the residence indicates that the installation of energy efficient
34 features or equipment would reduce utility costs by 10 percent or
35 more.

36 f. No qualified organization shall be awarded more than
37 \$400,000 through the pilot program in any one fiscal year. A
38 qualified organization receiving a grant shall contribute a matching
39 contribution in an amount not less than 50 percent of the grant
40 award. This matching requirement may be met through cash
41 contributions, or in-kind contributions, as permitted by the director.
42 Eligible veterans benefitting from the pilot program shall not pay an
43 application fee or any other cost for the work completed on their
44 residence, unless a modest fee can be charged, as permitted by the
45 director, without forcing the veteran's total monthly housing costs
46 to exceed 30 percent of total household income.

47 g. (1) The director shall provide an annual report to the
48 Governor, and the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991,

1 c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), presenting the following information with
2 respect to the associated year of the pilot program:

3 (a) the number of eligible veterans provided assistance under
4 the pilot program;

5 (b) the socioeconomic characteristics of the benefited veterans;

6 (c) the total number, types, and locations of qualified
7 organizations offered grant funding under the pilot program;

8 (d) the amount of matching funds, and form of in-kind
9 contributions raised with each grant;

10 (e) a description of the housing rehabilitation [and
11 modification] services provided, costs saved, and actions taken
12 under the pilot program;

13 (f) a description of the outreach initiatives implemented to
14 educate the general public and qualified organizations about the
15 pilot program, and to identify eligible veterans and their families;
16 and

17 (g) a description of compensation offered to workers employed
18 through the pilot program, and a certification that workers have not
19 been paid less than the prevailing wage rate for the worker's craft or
20 trade, as determined by the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce
21 Development pursuant to P.L.1963, c.150 (C.34:11-56.25 et seq.).

22 (h) any other information that the director considers relevant in
23 assessing the pilot program.

24 (2) Not later than six months following completion of the pilot
25 program, the director shall provide another report to the Governor,
26 and the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164
27 (C.52:14-19.1), presenting information necessary to assess the
28 success of the pilot program as a whole.

29 (cf: P.L.2017, c.258, s.3)

30
31 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

32
33
34 STATEMENT

35
36 This bill would amend the "New Jersey Housing Assistance for
37 Veterans Act," P.L.2017, c.258 (C.52:27D-516 et seq.) to expand
38 the purposes of the pilot program established by that act to include
39 the purchase and rehabilitation of abandoned homes for homeless
40 veterans. Currently, the pilot program established by this law
41 authorizes grants to eligible nonprofit organizations to rehabilitate
42 existing primary residences of disabled or low-income veterans.

43 Under the bill, a nonprofit veterans' organization that has
44 experience in rehabilitating housing for homeless veterans, or
45 others, would be eligible to receive a grant to purchase and
46 rehabilitate abandoned homes for homeless veterans. The bill
47 would afford a preference in awarding grants to nonprofit
48 organizations that serve communities that are in the greatest need of

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1 homeless services. The bill would allow the administrator of the
2 current pilot program to give preferences in awarding grants in
3 order to achieve a fair distribution among homeless veterans in
4 different geographical regions of the State.

5 Finally, this bill adjusts the existing law, through defining
6 “rehabilitation” and other language changes, to clarify that pilot
7 program funds may be expended for a broad range of project types,
8 including repairs, renovations, reconstruction, as well as the
9 installation of appropriate new fixtures and other alterations.